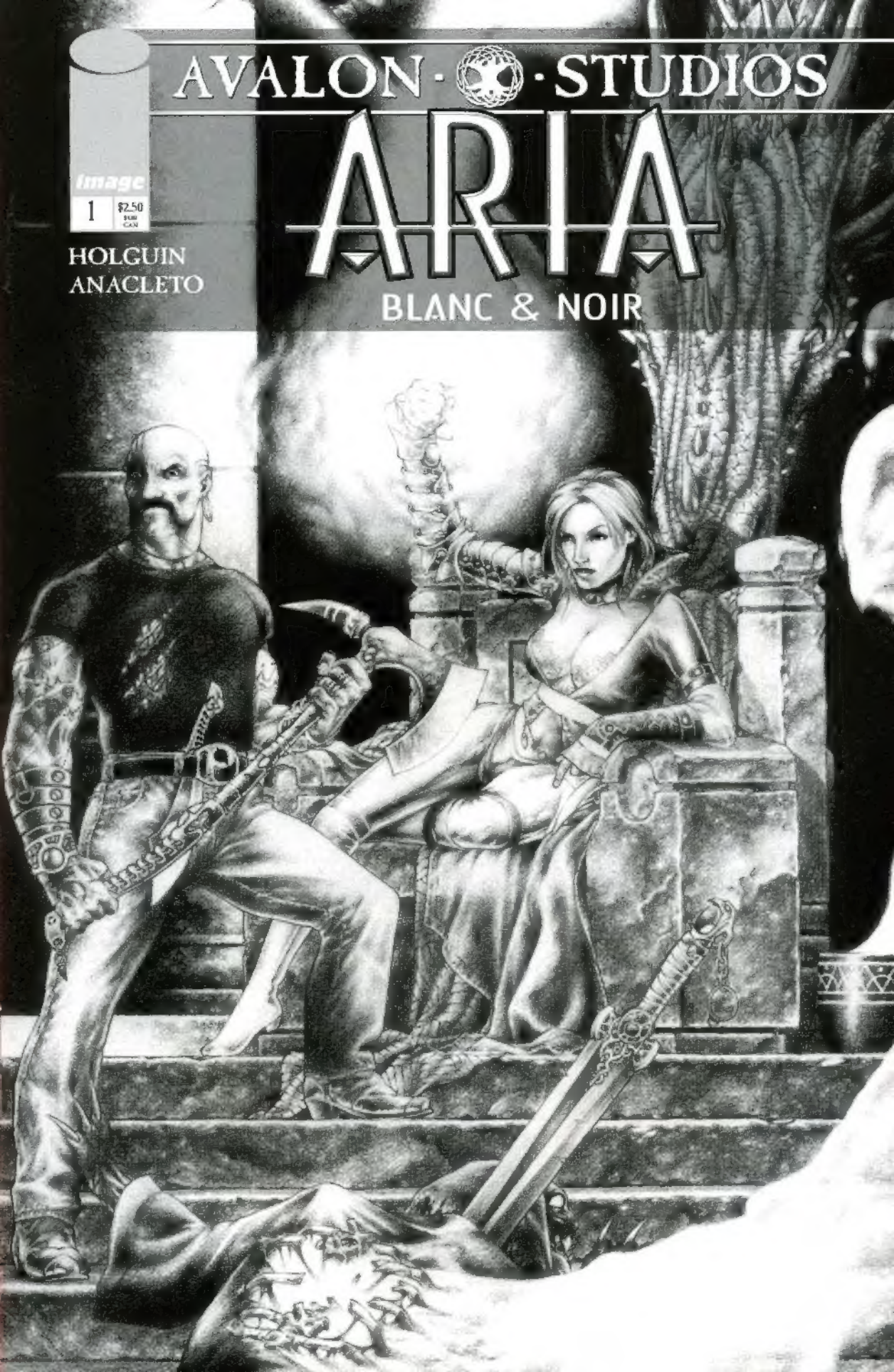
AVALON · STUDIOS
ARIA
BLANC & NOIR
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HOLGUIN
ANACLETO

'Sometimes I look at this world and it moves me to tears.
The joy and terror and the mad bloody
drama of it all.

And I wonder why THEY never seem to really see it.
Maybe one lifetime just isn't enough.
Or maybe it's too much. I can't say.

But the truth, to be perfectly plain, is that people are
looking for MAGIC in all the wrong places...

*

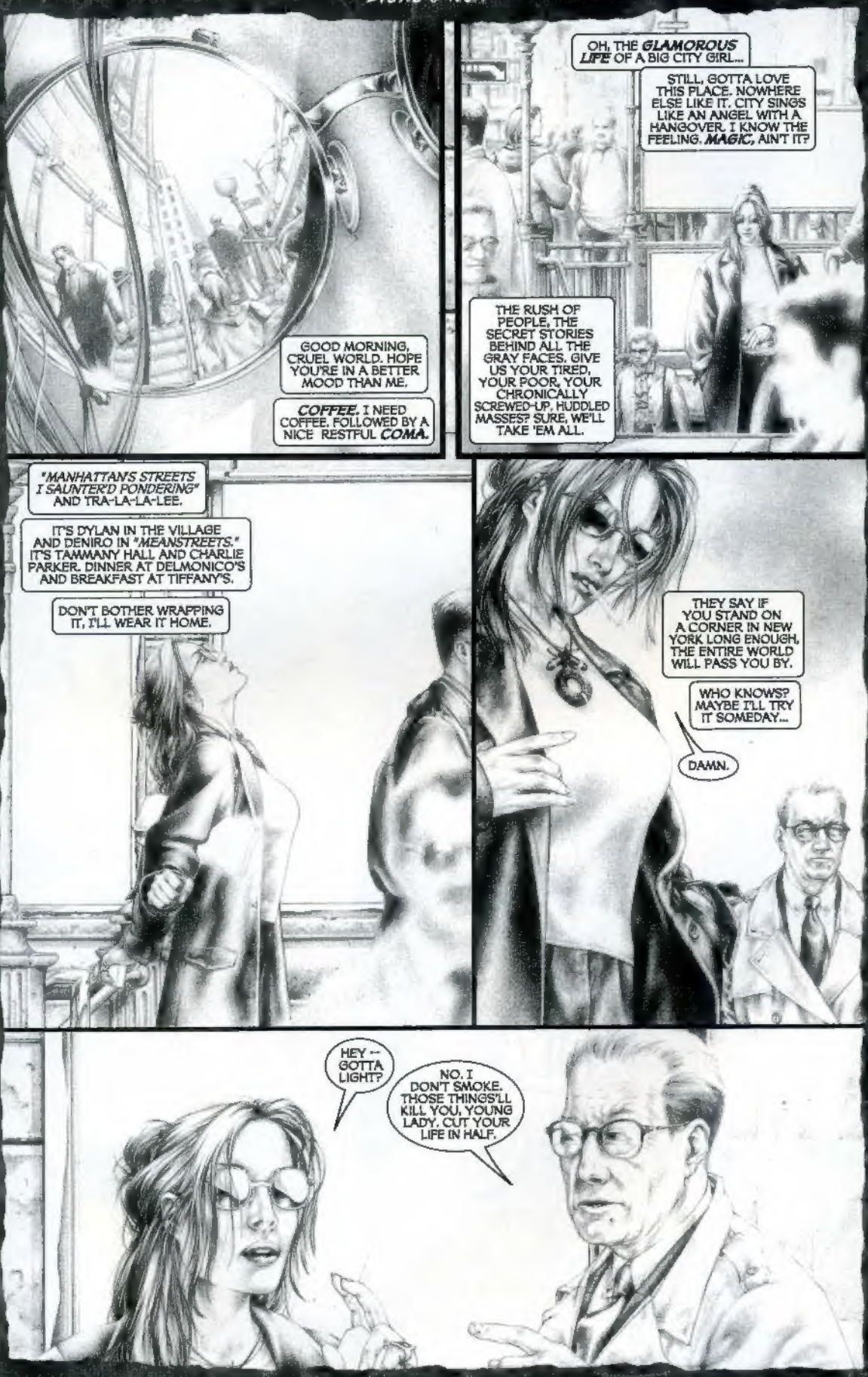
Somewhere around the corner, just beyond the edge of perception, lies a world you never dreamed existed...

A world where creatures of ancient myth, and gods long thought dead, walk unnoticed along the crowded streets of Manhattan. Where ladies of Faerie dance lonely nights away, bathed in soft neon glare. Where every shadow holds a secret, and every secret has a price. Where danger and wonder can be found at any turn, if you only know where to look.

Welcome to the World of...

ARIA

Aria Blanc & Noir Vol. 1, #1. March 1999. FIRST PRINTING. Published by Image Comics Inc. Office of Publication: 1440 N. Harbor Blvd. Suite #305 Fullerton, CA 92635. $2.50 US/$4.00 Canada. ARIA Blanc & Noir its logo and all related characters are trademark and copyright Brian Haberlin & Brian Holguin 1999. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Any simliarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reprinted without the express written consent of Brian Haberlin & Brian Holguin. PRINTED IN CANADA.


GOOD MORNING, CRUEL WORLD. HOPE YOU'RE IN A BETTER MOOD THAN ME.
COFFEE. I NEED COFFEE. FOLLOWED BY A NICE RESTFUL COMA.
OH, THE GLAMOROUS LIFE OF A BIG CITY GIRL...
STILL, GOTTA LOVE THIS PLACE. NOWHERE ELSE LIKE IT. CITY SINGS LIKE AN ANGEL WITH A HANGOVER. I KNOW THE FEELING. MAGIC, AIN'T IT?
THE RUSH OF PEOPLE, THE SECRET STORIES BEHIND ALL THE GRAY FACES. GIVE US YOUR TIRED, YOUR POOR, YOUR CHRONICALLY SCREWED-UP, HUDDLED MASSES? SURE, WE'LL TAKE 'EM ALL.
"MANHATTAN'S STREETS I SAUNTER'D PONDERING" AND TRA-LA-LA-LEE.
IT'S DYLAN IN THE VILLAGE AND DENIRO IN "MEANSTREETS." IT'S TAMMANY HALL AND CHARLIE PARKER. DINNER AT DELMONICO'S AND BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S.
DON'T BOTHER WRAPPING IT, I'LL WEAR IT HOME.
THEY SAY IF YOU STAND ON A CORNER IN NEW YORK LONG ENOUGH, THE ENTIRE WORLD WILL PASS YOU BY.
WHO KNOWS? MAYBE I'LL TRY IT SOMEDAY...
DAMN.
HEY -- GOTTA LIGHT?
NO. I DON'T SMOKE. THOSE THINGS'LL KILL YOU, YOUNG LADY. CUT YOUR LIFE IN HALF.

FAIRY TALE ENDINGS

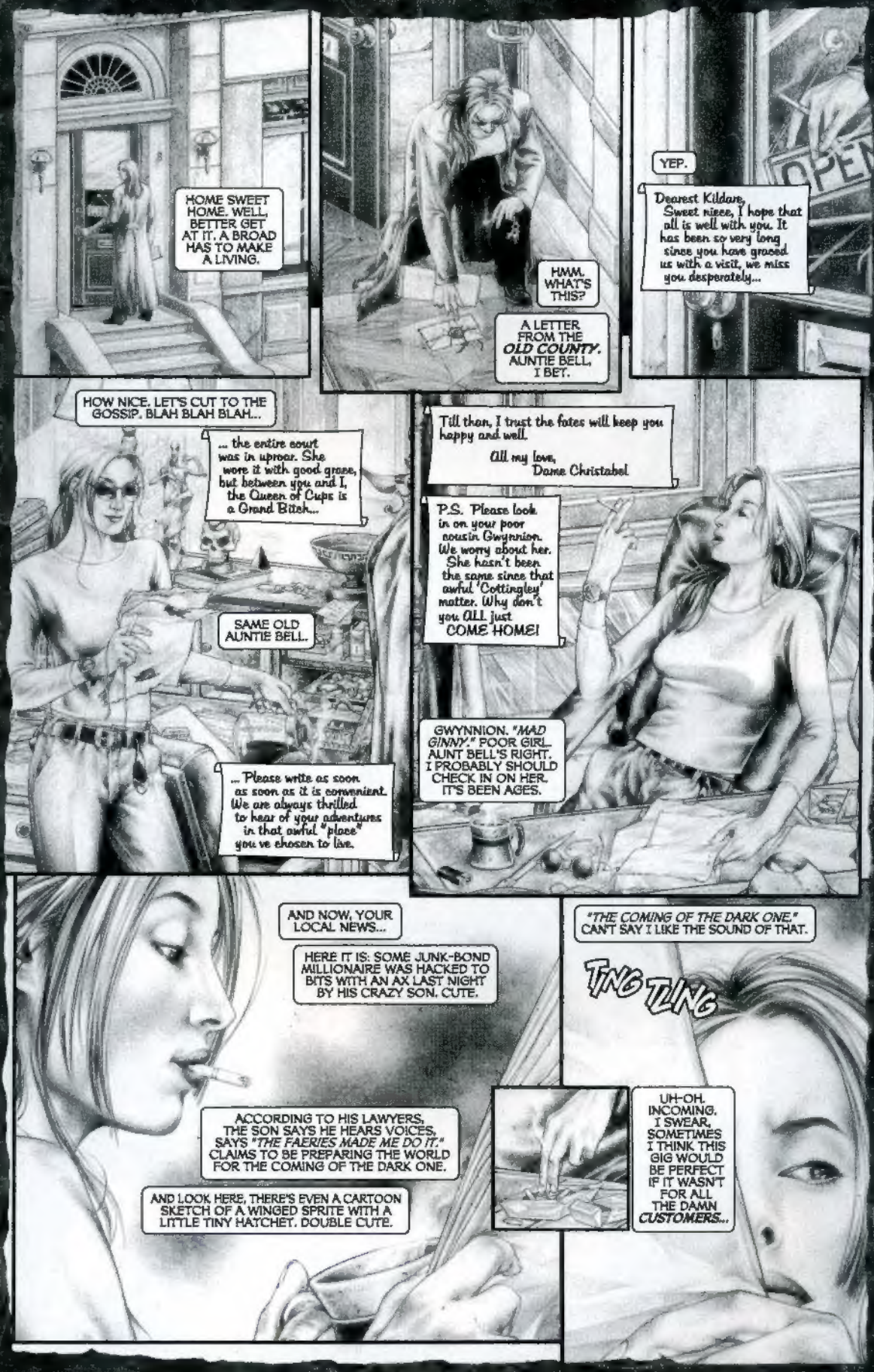
BRIAN HOLGUIN
STORY

JAY ANACLETO
ART

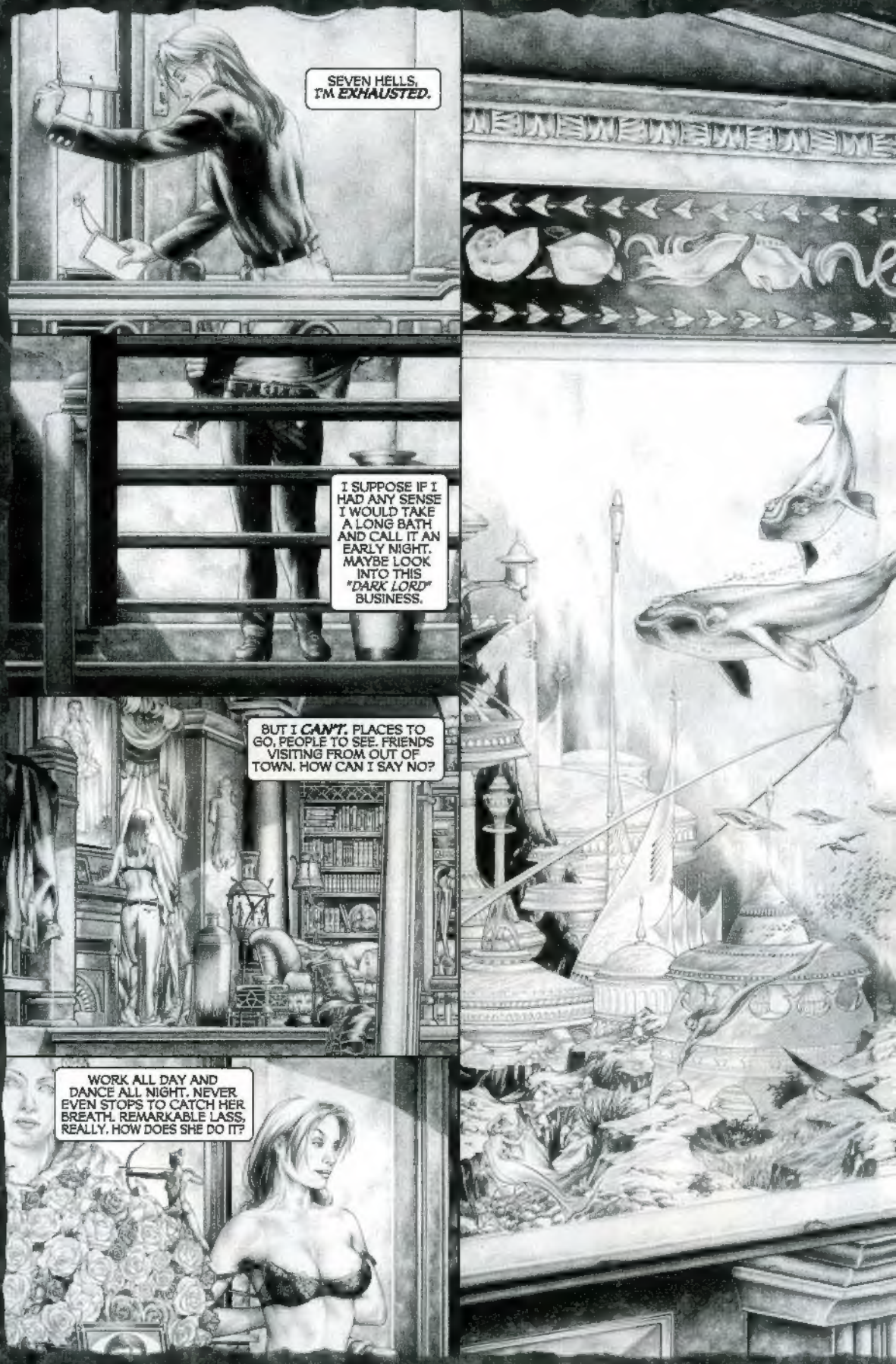
LETTERS JG & COMICRAFT'S LIZ AGRAPHIOTIS

ARIA CREATED BY BRIAN HOLGUIN WITH BRIAN HABERLIN

WELL, AT LEAST IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY. ONE OF THOSE COOL, ANYTHING-CAN-HAPPEN-BETTER-PACK-A-TOOTHBRUSH KIND OF DAYS.
A DAY FOR ADVENTURE.
YOU CAN TASTE IT ON THE WIND, FEEL IT IN YOUR STOMACH.
"AND SO NOW POOR TINKERBELL LAY WEAK AND DYING" -- LOOK, SHE SEEMS SO SAD. "SO PETER SAID, 'IF YOU BELIEVE IN FAERIES, CLAP YOUR HANDS...'"
REMEMBER THIS PART? DO YOU BELIEVE IN FAERIES? CLAP YOUR HANDS!
A GREAT DAY TO BE YOUNG.
MOM, LOOK... THAT GIRL!
HONEY, GET BACK HERE. PLEASE. DON'T BOTHER THE NICE LADY.


HOME SWEET HOME. WELL, BETTER GET AT IT. A BROAD HAS TO MAKE A LIVING.
HMM. WHAT'S THIS?
A LETTER FROM THE OLD COUNTY. AUNTIE BELL, I BET.
YEP.
Dearest Kildare, Sweet niece, I hope that all is well with you. It has been so very long since you have graced us with a visit, we miss you desperately...
HOW NICE. LET'S CUT TO THE GOSSIP. BLAH BLAH BLAH...
... the entire court was in uproar. She wore it with good grace, but between you and I, the Queen of Cups is a Grand Bitch...
SAME OLD AUNTIE BELL.
... Please write as soon as it is convenient. We are always thrilled to hear of your adventures in that awful "place" you've chosen to live.
Till then, I trust the fates will keep you happy and well.
All my love,
Dame Christabel
P.S. Please look in on your poor cousin Gwynnion. We worry about her. She hasn't been the same since that awful 'Cottingley' matter. Why don't you ALL just COME HOME!
GWYNNION. "MAD GINNY." POOR GIRL. AUNT BELL'S RIGHT. I PROBABLY SHOULD CHECK IN ON HER. IT'S BEEN AGES.
AND NOW, YOUR LOCAL NEWS...
HERE IT IS: SOME JUNK-BOND MILLIONAIRE WAS HACKED TO BITS WITH AN AX LAST NIGHT BY HIS CRAZY SON. CUTE.
ACCORDING TO HIS LAWYERS, THE SON SAYS HE HEARS VOICES, SAYS "THE FAERIES MADE ME DO IT." CLAIMS TO BE PREPARING THE WORLD FOR THE COMING OF THE DARK ONE.
AND LOOK HERE, THERE'S EVEN A CARTOON SKETCH OF A WINGED SPRITE WITH A LITTLE TINY HATCHET. DOUBLE CUTE.
"THE COMING OF THE DARK ONE." CAN'T SAY I LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT.
TING TING
UH-OH. INCOMING. I SWEAR, SOMETIMES I THINK THIS GIG WOULD BE PERFECT IF IT WASN'T FOR ALL THE DAMN CUSTOMERS...

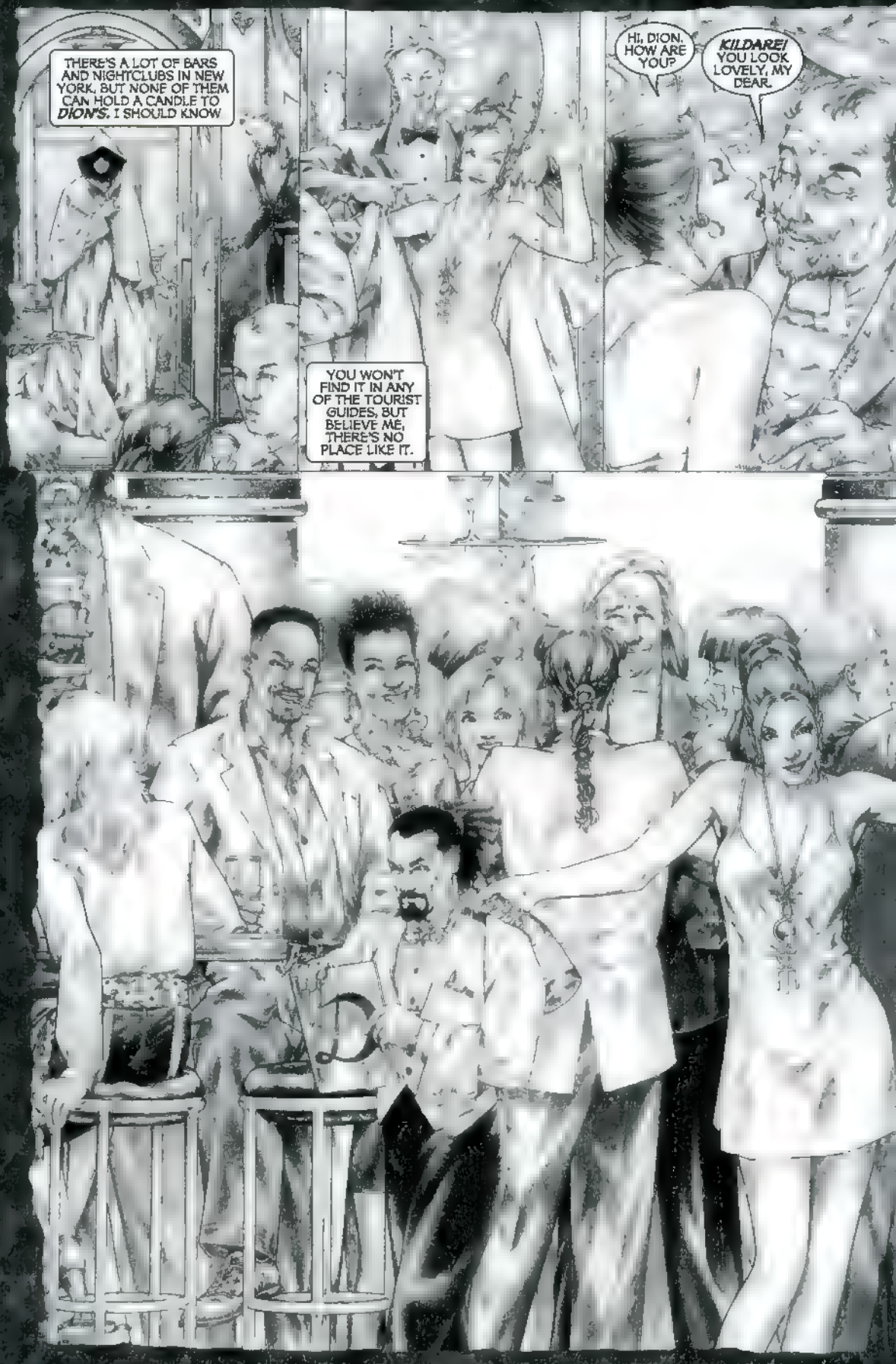
DO YOU HAVE ABSINTHE? Y'KNOW, THE DRINK. LIKE IN THAT TRENT REZNOR VIDEO?
YEAH. WE ARE MISTRESSES OF THE SHADOWS, LOST PILGRIMS FROM NIGHT'S PLUTONIAN SHORE. WE SEEK SWEET OBLIVION.
ABSINTHE? WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO BUY SOME CRACK WHILE YOU'RE AT IT?
FIRST OF ALL, IT TASTES LIKE SOUR CAT PISS AND PEOPLE ONLY STARTED DRINKING IT BECAUSE THERE WAS A HEAVY TAX ON WINE IN PARIS.
SECOND, IF YOU ASK ME...
...ANYONE WHO DESCRIBES THEMSELVES AS "LOST PILGRIMS FROM NIGHT'S PLUTONIAN SHORE" OUGHT TO BE SHOT IN THE KNEECAPS.
HAVE A NICE DAY.
...AND HER EYES. THEY'RE SO BLUE... DUDE, IT'S LIKE... I DON'T KNOW LIKE TY-D-BOWL! I MEAN, I JUST CAN'T GET HER OUT OF MY MIND. HAUNTED. THAT'S WHAT I AM. SO I WAS... WELL...
YOU'RE SAYING YOU WANT A LOVE POTION, RIGHT?
UH... YES. PLEASE. A LOVE POTION WOULD BE GREAT.
AND ABOUT WHAT WERE YOU LOOKING TO SPEND IN ORDER TO WIN THE HEART OF THIS JEWEL OF FEMININE VIRTUE?
I DON'T KNOW. TEN DOLLARS? MAYBE 12.
PAL, YOU'RE A REAL PRINCE. ANYONE EVER TELL YOU THAT?
THE TENANT, HE LEAVE IT BEHIND. HONEST. LOOKS OLD, NO? I HEARD HIM SAY BEFORE IT BELONG TO ARTIE. SO I FIGURE MAYBE IT'S ARTHUR. YOU KNOW — KING ARTHUR.
MAYBE'S MAGIC OR SOMETHING. I HEARD YOU COULD TELL.
WELL, SEE THAT INSCRIPTION? I BELIEVE IT WILL SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE SWORD'S TRUE PROVENANCE.
NOW, I ADMIT THAT INFORMATION ON THE HISTORICAL ARTHUR IS SKETCHY AT BEST, AND SCHOLARS OFTEN DISAGREE...
BUT I FEEL IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT THE FABLED KING OF THE BRITONS WAS NEVER, IN FACT...
...A MEMBER OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS. JUST A HUNCH.
OH.
OH, WHAT FOOLS THESE MORTALS BE!


SEVEN HELLS, I'M EXHAUSTED.
I SUPPOSE IF I HAD ANY SENSE I WOULD TAKE A LONG BATH AND CALL IT AN EARLY NIGHT. MAYBE LOOK INTO THIS "DARK LORD" BUSINESS.
BUT I CAN'T. PLACES TO GO, PEOPLE TO SEE. FRIENDS VISITING FROM OUT OF TOWN. HOW CAN I SAY NO?
WORK ALL DAY AND DANCE ALL NIGHT. NEVER EVEN STOPS TO CATCH HER BREATH. REMARKABLE LASS, REALLY. HOW DOES SHE DO IT?

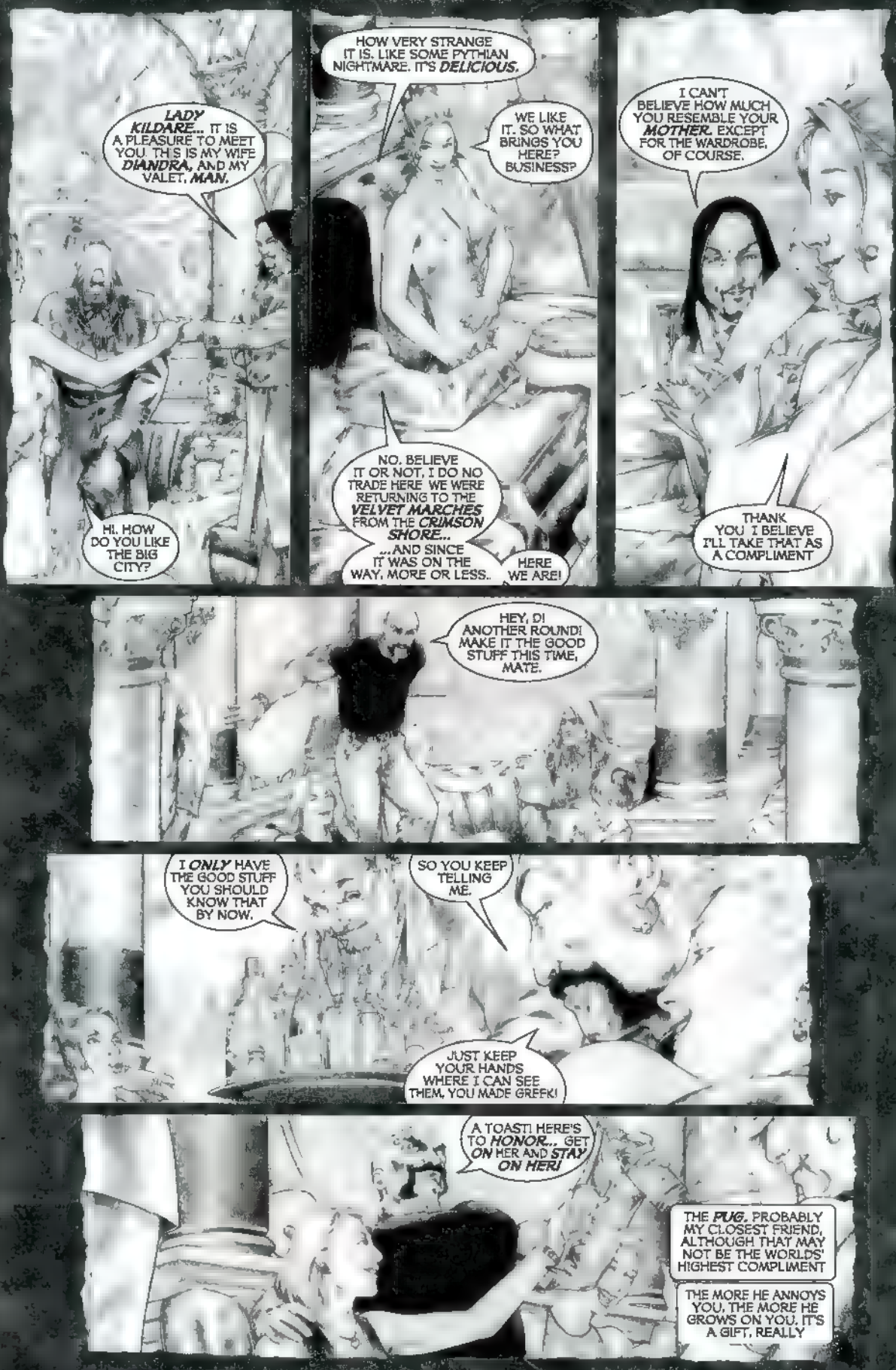
WELL, I SUPPOSE A GIRL HAS TO KEEP *SOME SECRETS.*

ENGLAND. THE COTSWALDS.
PRETTY. SO PRETTY. LIKE LI'L BUTT'RFLIES. LITTLE ANGELS
AYE! PUT A CORK IN IT, SUNSHINE, OR I'LL COME PUT MY BOOT UP YER ARSE!
LITTLE ANGELS TRY TO FLY AWAY. NAUGHTY LITTLE THINGS. NAUGHTY NAUGHTY. NASTY THINGS.
NAUGHTY THINGS. BUT YOU'LL LEARN SOON ENOUGH. SOON ENOUGH. YES, SIR. BUT SOON ENOUGH WILL BE TOO LATE.
TOO LATE. IT'LL BE. ALL BE DEAD SOON. ALL DEAD ALL DEAD. YES SIR...

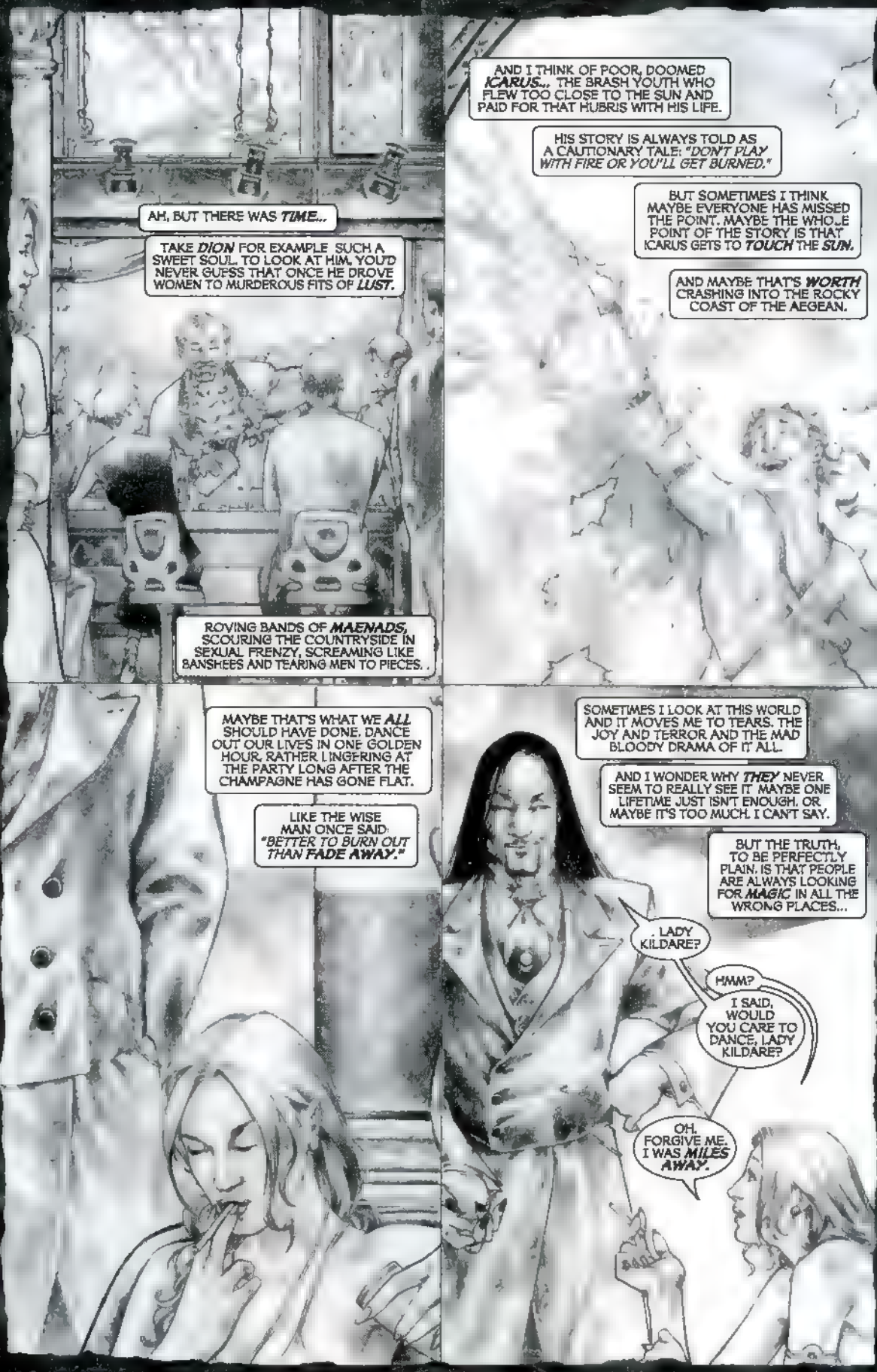
..COUNT IBLIS AND HIS WIFE, FROM THE VELVET MARCHES. THEIR FIRST TIME IN NEW YORK. EVERYONE SHOULD BE THERE. ROBIN. LULLABY... SWANNEE...
MAX AND ONDINE... MAYBE EVEN THE SPHINX... AND OF COURSE, THE PUG, WHO'S PROBABLY TERRORIZING THEM AS SPEAK. WHICH IS WHY I HAVE TO HURRY.
RUNNING OFF TO MEET A MARRIED MAN... HOW VERY LIKE YOU.
WHO ASKED YOU? BESIDES, IT'S NOT LIKE THAT.. HEY, DOES THIS DRESS MAKE MY BUTT LOOK BIG?
DEFINE "BIG."
FUNNY. KEEP IT UP AND I'LL GO GET THE HAMMER.
YOU WOULDN'T DARE. IT'S BAD LUCK, IN CASE YOU HADN'T HEARD.
HEY REMEMBER WHO YOU'RE MESSING WITH. I CAN DO SEVEN YEARS STANDING ON MY HEAD.
THAT'S BETTER, THANKS.
GOTTA RUN.
BITCH.
I HEARD THAT!
SIGHS LADY KILDARE OF THE HOUSE OF DANNAN, YOURS IS THE VERY PARAGON OF POSTERIORS, INDEED A "BUTT WITHOUT COMPARE." POETS SHOULD WEEP AT THE SIGHT OF IT.

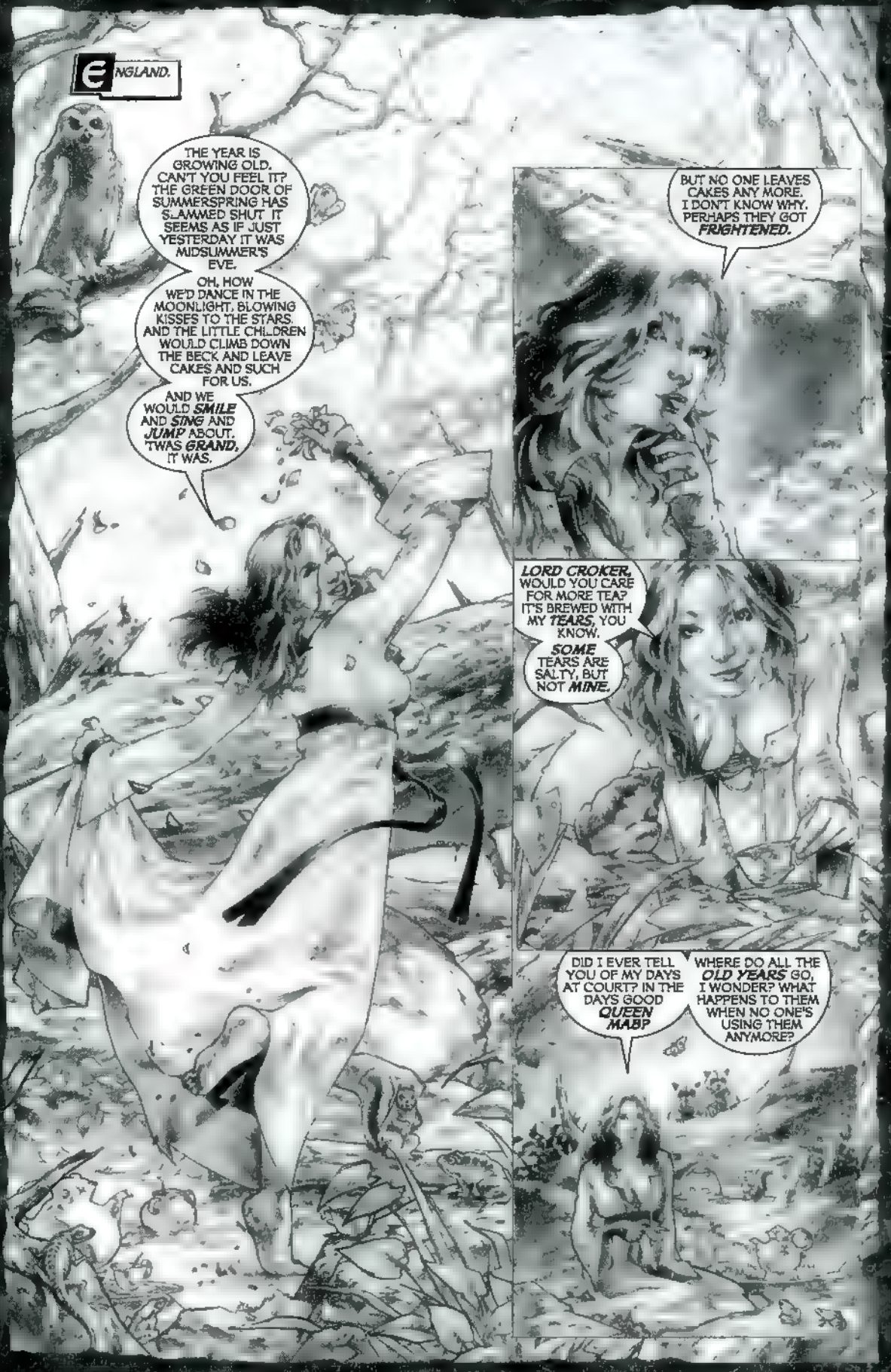

THERE'S A LOT OF BARS AND NIGHTCLUBS IN NEW YORK. BUT NONE OF THEM CAN HOLD A CANDLE TO *DION'S*. I SHOULD KNOW
YOU WON'T FIND IT IN ANY OF THE TOURIST GUIDES, BUT BELIEVE ME, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE IT.
HI, DION. HOW ARE YOU?
KILDARE! YOU LOOK LOVELY, MY DEAR.

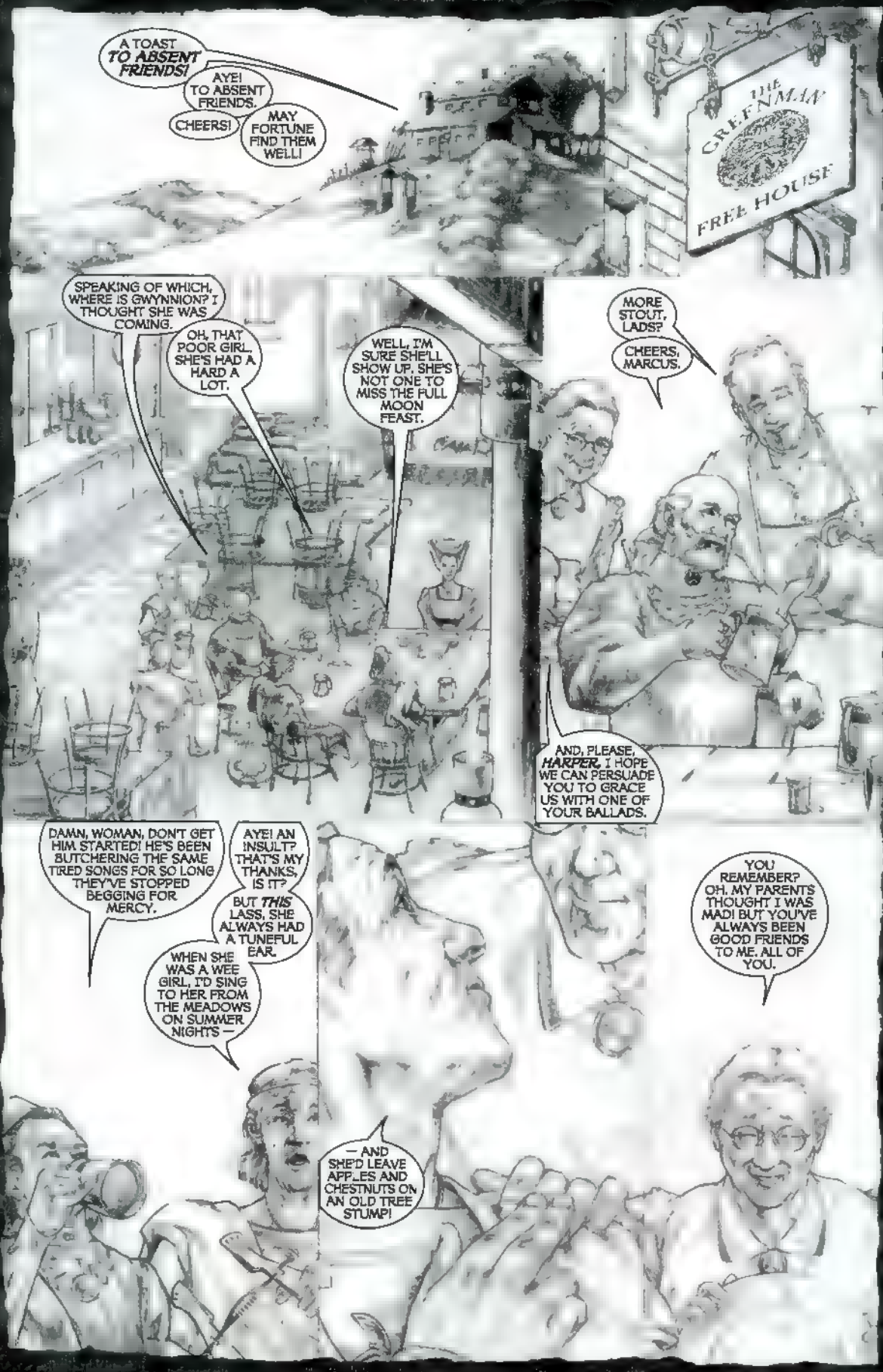
SO AM I FASHIONABLY LATE?
WELL, LET'S SEE. THE PUG'S BEEN HERE SINCE NOON, THE OTHERS FOR MAYBE AN HOUR OR SO.
O!! TINKERBELL! OVER HERE, LOVE!
'SCUSE ME.
PARDON ME. GET YOUR HAND OFF MY ASS.
THANK YOU.
HEY! WHAT'S ALL THIS? YOU DIDN'T START WITHOUT ME, DID YOU?


LADY KILDARE... IT IS A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU. THIS IS MY WIFE DIANDRA, AND MY VALET, MAN.
HI. HOW DO YOU LIKE THE BIG CITY?
HOW VERY STRANGE IT IS. LIKE SOME PYTHIAN NIGHTMARE. IT'S DELICIOUS.
WE LIKE IT. SO WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE? BUSINESS?
NO. BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I DO NO TRADE HERE. WE WERE RETURNING TO THE VELVET MARCHES FROM THE CRIMSON SHORE...
...AND SINCE IT WAS ON THE WAY, MORE OR LESS..
HERE WE ARE!
I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH YOU RESEMBLE YOUR MOTHER. EXCEPT FOR THE WARDROBE, OF COURSE.
THANK YOU. I BELIEVE I'LL TAKE THAT AS A COMPLIMENT
HEY, DI ANOTHER ROUND! MAKE IT THE GOOD STUFF THIS TIME, MATE.
I ONLY HAVE THE GOOD STUFF YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT BY NOW.
SO YOU KEEP TELLING ME.
JUST KEEP YOUR HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE THEM, YOU MADE GREEK!
A TOAST! HERE'S TO HONOR... GET ON HER AND STAY ON HER!
THE PUG. PROBABLY MY CLOSEST FRIEND, ALTHOUGH THAT MAY NOT BE THE WORLDS' HIGHEST COMPLIMENT
THE MORE HE ANNOYS YOU, THE MORE HE GROWS ON YOU. IT'S A GIFT, REALLY

AND SO IT GOES. IN OUR LITTLE CIRCLE OF DRINK AND GOSSIP AND DRAMA. THEY SAY NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE *EXCESS.*
BUT SOMEHOW, IT'S ALL A LITTLE SAD, SUCH TRANSITORY PLEASURES... YOU'D THINK WE'D HAVE GROWN WEARY OF THEM AGES AGO. MAYBE WE'RE LATE BLOOMERS.
MAYBE ALL THIS TALK IS MAKING ME A LITTLE HOMESICK. OR MAYBE I'M STARTING TO FEEL MY *AGE.*
HAH!
BUT NOW IT'S ALL SO FAMILIAR.
VIOLA!
I REMEMBER THE OLD DAYS, WHEN THE WORLD WAS YOUNG AND FILLED WITH WONDER. WHEN THERE WERE STILL NEW SENSATIONS, NEW APPETITES TO BE SATED
NEW *MISTAKES* TO BE MADE.
WE PLAY OUR PARTS AND GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS, BUT SOMEHOW IT SEEMS LIKE SOMETHING'S MISSING.


AH, BUT THERE WAS *TIME*...
TAKE *DION* FOR EXAMPLE. SUCH A SWEET SOUL. TO LOOK AT HIM, YOU'D NEVER GUESS THAT ONCE HE DROVE WOMEN TO MURDEROUS FITS OF *LUST*.
ROVING BANDS OF *MAENADS*, SCOURING THE COUNTRYSIDE IN SEXUAL FRENZY, SCREAMING LIKE BANSHEES AND TEARING MEN TO PIECES.
AND I THINK OF POOR, DOOMED *ICARUS*... THE BRASH YOUTH WHO FLEW TOO CLOSE TO THE SUN AND PAID FOR THAT HUBRIS WITH HIS LIFE.
HIS STORY IS ALWAYS TOLD AS A CAUTIONARY TALE: *"DON'T PLAY WITH FIRE OR YOU'LL GET BURNED."*
BUT SOMETIMES I THINK MAYBE EVERYONE HAS MISSED THE POINT. MAYBE THE WHOLE POINT OF THE STORY IS THAT ICARUS GETS TO *TOUCH* THE *SUN*.
AND MAYBE THAT'S *WORTH* CRASHING INTO THE ROCKY COAST OF THE AEGEAN.
MAYBE THAT'S WHAT WE *ALL* SHOULD HAVE DONE. DANCE OUT OUR LIVES IN ONE GOLDEN HOUR, RATHER LINGERING AT THE PARTY LONG AFTER THE CHAMPAGNE HAS GONE FLAT.
LIKE THE WISE MAN ONCE SAID: *"BETTER TO BURN OUT THAN FADE AWAY."*
SOMETIMES I LOOK AT THIS WORLD AND IT MOVES ME TO TEARS. THE JOY AND TERROR AND THE MAD BLOODY DRAMA OF IT ALL.
AND I WONDER WHY *THEY* NEVER SEEM TO REALLY SEE IT. MAYBE ONE LIFETIME JUST ISN'T ENOUGH. OR MAYBE IT'S TOO MUCH. I CAN'T SAY.
BUT THE TRUTH, TO BE PERFECTLY PLAIN, IS THAT PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR *MAGIC* IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES...
. LADY KILDARE?
HMM?
I SAID, WOULD YOU CARE TO DANCE, LADY KILDARE?
OH. FORGIVE ME. I WAS *MILES AWAY*.


ENGLAND.
THE YEAR IS GROWING OLD. CAN'T YOU FEEL IT? THE GREEN DOOR OF SUMMERSPRING HAS SLAMMED SHUT. IT SEEMS AS IF JUST YESTERDAY IT WAS MIDSUMMER'S EVE.
OH, HOW WE'D DANCE IN THE MOONLIGHT, BLOWING KISSES TO THE STARS. AND THE LITTLE CHILDREN WOULD CLIMB DOWN THE BECK AND LEAVE CAKES AND SUCH FOR US.
AND WE WOULD SMILE AND SING AND JUMP ABOUT. 'TWAS GRAND, IT WAS.
BUT NO ONE LEAVES CAKES ANY MORE. I DON'T KNOW WHY. PERHAPS THEY GOT FRIGHTENED.
LORD CROKER, WOULD YOU CARE FOR MORE TEA? IT'S BREWED WITH MY TEARS, YOU KNOW.
SOME TEARS ARE SALTY, BUT NOT MINE.
DID I EVER TELL YOU OF MY DAYS AT COURT? IN THE DAYS GOOD QUEEN MAB?
WHERE DO ALL THE OLD YEARS GO, I WONDER? WHAT HAPPENS TO THEM WHEN NO ONE'S USING THEM ANYMORE?

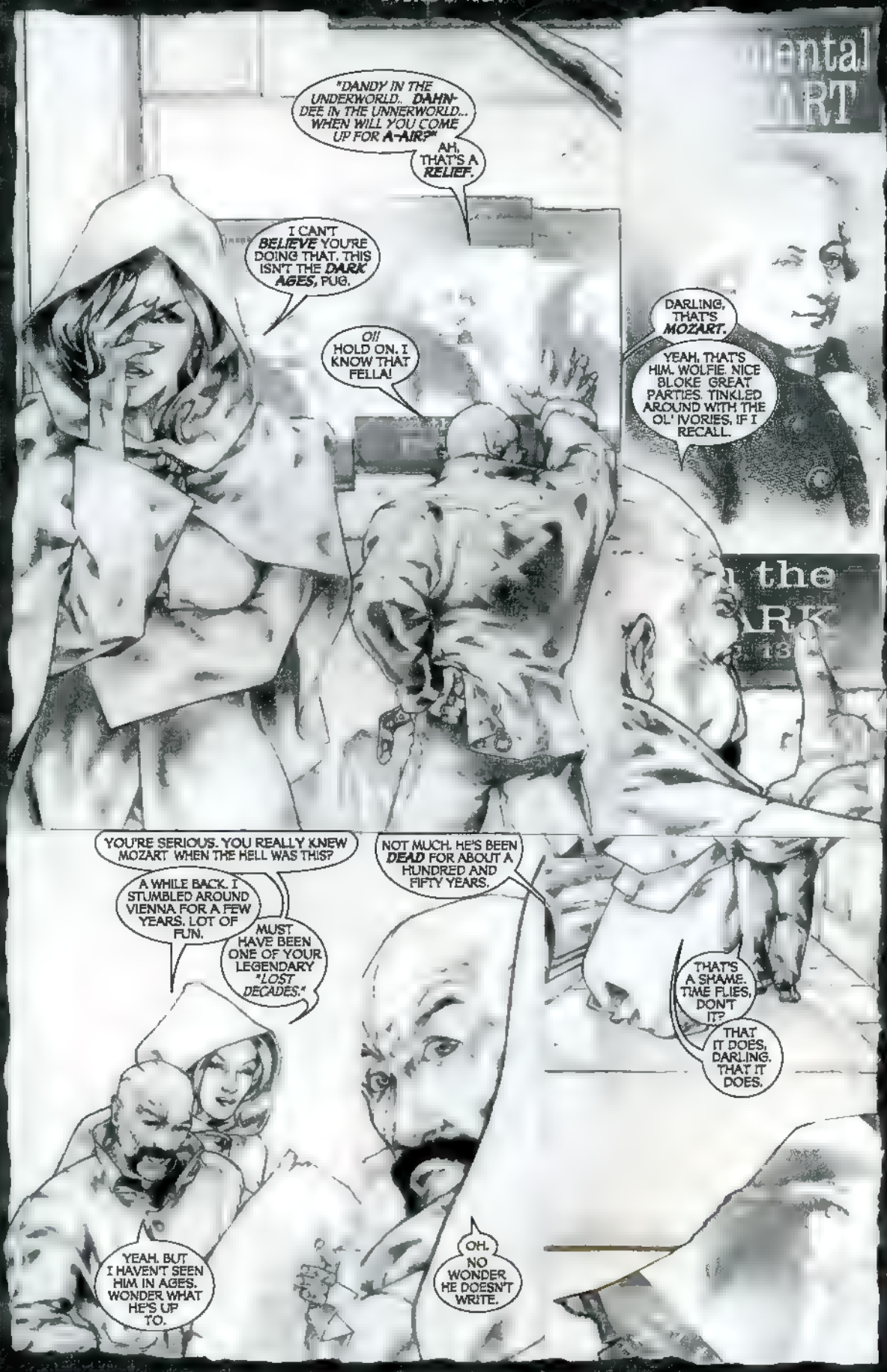

A TOAST TO ABSENT FRIENDS!
AYE! TO ABSENT FRIENDS.
CHEERS!
MAY FORTUNE FIND THEM WELL!
THE GREENMAN FREE HOUSE
SPEAKING OF WHICH, WHERE IS GWYNNION? I THOUGHT SHE WAS COMING.
OH, THAT POOR GIRL. SHE'S HAD A HARD A LOT.
WELL, I'M SURE SHE'LL SHOW UP. SHE'S NOT ONE TO MISS THE FULL MOON FEAST.
MORE STOUT, LADS?
CHEERS, MARCUS.
AND, PLEASE, HARPER, I HOPE WE CAN PERSUADE YOU TO GRACE US WITH ONE OF YOUR BALLADS.
DAMN, WOMAN, DON'T GET HIM STARTED! HE'S BEEN BUTCHERING THE SAME TIRED SONGS FOR SO LONG THEY'VE STOPPED BEGGING FOR MERCY.
AYE! AN INSULT? THAT'S MY THANKS, IS IT?
BUT THIS LASS, SHE ALWAYS HAD A TUNEFUL EAR.
WHEN SHE WAS A WEE GIRL, I'D SING TO HER FROM THE MEADOWS ON SUMMER NIGHTS —
— AND SHE'D LEAVE APPLES AND CHESTNUTS ON AN OLD TREE STUMP!
YOU REMEMBER? OH, MY PARENTS THOUGHT I WAS MAD! BUT YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN GOOD FRIENDS TO ME. ALL OF YOU.

WELL, I WAS ALWAYS ONE TO TREAT MY BETTERS WITH RESPECT.
OH PLEASE! YOU FORGET THAT TIME AT THE BELTAINE FAIR? "AND YOU MY GOOD QUEEN, CAN KISS MY DIMPLED ARSE!"
I WAS DRUNK...
...I'LL NEVER LIVE THAT DOWN, WILL I?
HA HA HA HA HA
SKRITCH SKRITCH
HMMM? MAYBE THAT'S OUR POOR GINNY NOW.
GOOD TIMES, THOSE WERE. GOOD TIMES.
SORRY, MATE. LAST CALL WAS HOURS AGO. PRIVATE PARTY NOW. INVITEES ONLY.
IS IT THE CHAP FROM THE V.A.T.? TOP ME OFF THERE, LUV. CHEERS.
D'JA HEAR ME? WE'RE CLOSED. ON YER BIKE, SON.

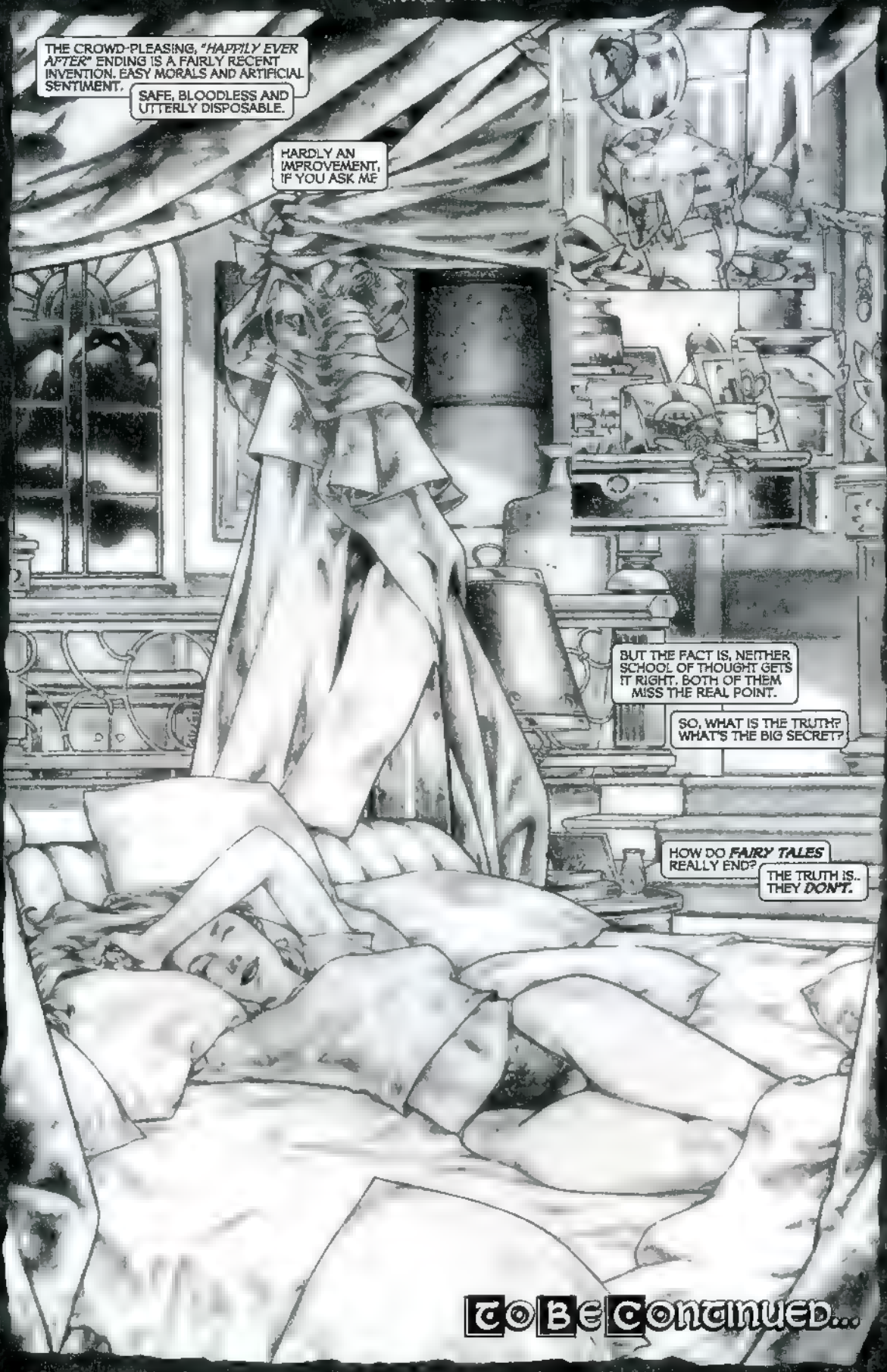
SUCH A LOVELY NIGHT. THE MOON SO FAT AND GRINNING. IT'S. OH, DEAR. THE FEAST!
I WAS MEANT TO MEET MY FRIENDS. I FORGOT I HOPE THEY'RE NOT CROSS.
I'M SORRY, BUT I MUST AWAY. I'M LATE ALREADY...
...WHAT'S THIS THEN? YOU DON'T BELONG DOWN HERE ON THE GROUND, DO YOU?
I'M SO SORRY I'M LATE. I'M SUCH A WOODEN HEAD SOMETIMES.
BY THE WAY, MUSTER MARK...

...UM...
...I THINK YOUR WHATZIT IS BROKE.

NEW YORK.
WELL, I GUESS THIS IS IT. IT WAS NICE MEETING YOU.
THE PLEASURE WAS ALL MINE, MY DEAR.
IF I MAY BE SO BOLD, LADY KILDARE.
...I WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT YOU WITH A GIFT. A SMALL TOKEN OF THE FRIENDSHIP THAT NOW GROWS BETWEEN US.
BUT I INSIST. PLEASE DO NOT INSULT ME BY REJECTING MY GENEROSITY.
DON'T INSULT ME BY "INSISTING," IBLIS.
NO THANK YOU.
VERY WELL. ANOTHER TIME, PERHAPS. AS I SAID, IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE. KEEP WELL.
YEAH. IT WAS NICE. COME BACK SOON.
DON'T LET THE DOOR HIT YOU IN THE ASS...
HAH!
CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT CREEP TRIED TO "GIFT" ME? WHAT, WAS I BORN YESTERDAY?
HARDLY. STILL, IN ALL, HE'S A PRETTY NICE BLOKE, DON'T YA THINK?
FOR EVIL INCARNATE, I MEAN?


"DANDY IN THE UNDERWORLD... DAHN-DEE IN THE UNNERWORLD... WHEN WILL YOU COME UP FOR A-AIR?"
AH, THAT'S A RELIEF.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE DOING THAT. THIS ISN'T THE DARK AGES, PUG.
O!! HOLD ON. I KNOW THAT FELLA!
DARLING, THAT'S MOZART.
YEAH. THAT'S HIM. WOLFIE. NICE BLOKE. GREAT PARTIES. TINKLED AROUND WITH THE OL' IVORIES, IF I RECALL.
YOU'RE SERIOUS. YOU REALLY KNEW MOZART WHEN THE HELL WAS THIS?
A WHILE BACK. I STUMBLED AROUND VIENNA FOR A FEW YEARS. LOT OF FUN.
MUST HAVE BEEN ONE OF YOUR LEGENDARY "LOST DECADES."
NOT MUCH. HE'S BEEN DEAD FOR ABOUT A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS.
THAT'S A SHAME. TIME FLIES, DON'T IT?
THAT IT DOES, DARLING. THAT IT DOES.
YEAH. BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM IN AGES. WONDER WHAT HE'S UP TO.
OH. NO WONDER HE DOESN'T WRITE.

WHAT A NIGHT. I'M GONNA PAY FOR IT IN THE MORNING, I CAN TELL.
SEE YOU SOON, DARLING.
G'NIGHT YOU GET SOME SLEEP NOW, YOU HEAR.
AND SO WE CALL IT A NIGHT. TIME TO GO UPSTAIRS AND TUCK MYSELF IN.
I'LL TRY.
I JUST WANT TO WRAP MYSELF UP IN THE WARM EIDERDOWN OF DREAM AND SLEEP FOR A THOUSAND YEARS. I IKE A PRINCESS IN ONE OF THE OLD STORIES.
HMMM.
"IF I SHOULD FALL FROM GRACE WITH GOD, WHERE THE DOCTORS CAN'T RE-LIEVE ME."
SCARCELY A HAPPY ENDING IN SIGHT.
RIGHT. SO WHO ARE YOU THEN?
YOU KNOW IN THE OLD DAYS, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, FAIRY STORIES HAD GRISLY, HORRIFIC ENDINGS.
THE HERO IS DEVOURED BY THE FEARSOME BEAST... THE YOUNG GIRL DISSOLVES INTO SEA FOAM.
"— OR BURIED 'NEATH THE SOD, WHERE TH' ANGELS WON'T RECEIVE ME —"
...SOMEONE'S SWEET GRANNY IS BAKED IN A PIE AND FED TO HER LOVED ONES.
"— LET ME GO BOYS, LET ME GO..."


THE CROWD-PLEASING, "HAPPILY EVER AFTER" ENDING IS A FAIRLY RECENT INVENTION. EASY MORALS AND ARTIFICIAL SENTIMENT.
SAFE, BLOODLESS AND UTTERLY DISPOSABLE.
HARDLY AN IMPROVEMENT, IF YOU ASK ME
BUT THE FACT IS, NEITHER SCHOOL OF THOUGHT GETS IT RIGHT. BOTH OF THEM MISS THE REAL POINT.
SO, WHAT IS THE TRUTH? WHAT'S THE BIG SECRET?
HOW DO FAIRY TALES REALLY END?
THE TRUTH IS.. THEY DON'T.
To Be Continued...

DON'T ADJUST YOUR DIAL...

Confession time. This was never meant to happen. From the beginning, "ARIA" was envisioned to be something a little different – a unique mixture of subtlety and spectacle, of the wondrous and the mundane. A new myth cycle for the new millennium. And it was always meant to be in COLOR. So what happened?

No big secret, really. A while back, in anticipation of the ongoing "ARIA" series, we released a limited edition "Preview" issue in black and white. Readers loved it. It sold out quickly and the back stock went even quicker.

A few months later, "ARIA" #1 debuted in its full-color glory and exited comic shops with astonishing speed. Everyone loved it. Everyone raved about it. And it seems damn near everybody asked to see the original, uncolored pencils.

So who are we to refuse?

Consider this an alternate take... ARIA 1.0... Back to Mono... Whatever. But mostly consider it a chance to see Mr. Jay Anacleto's sterling pencil work in its original form. Check out his amazingly nuanced use of light and shading, the subtlety of texture and tone.

You asked for it.

You got it.

Enjoy.

See? Some issues really are as simple as black and white...

ARIA

Cover Gallery

Aria Preview Cover

Aria Regular Cover

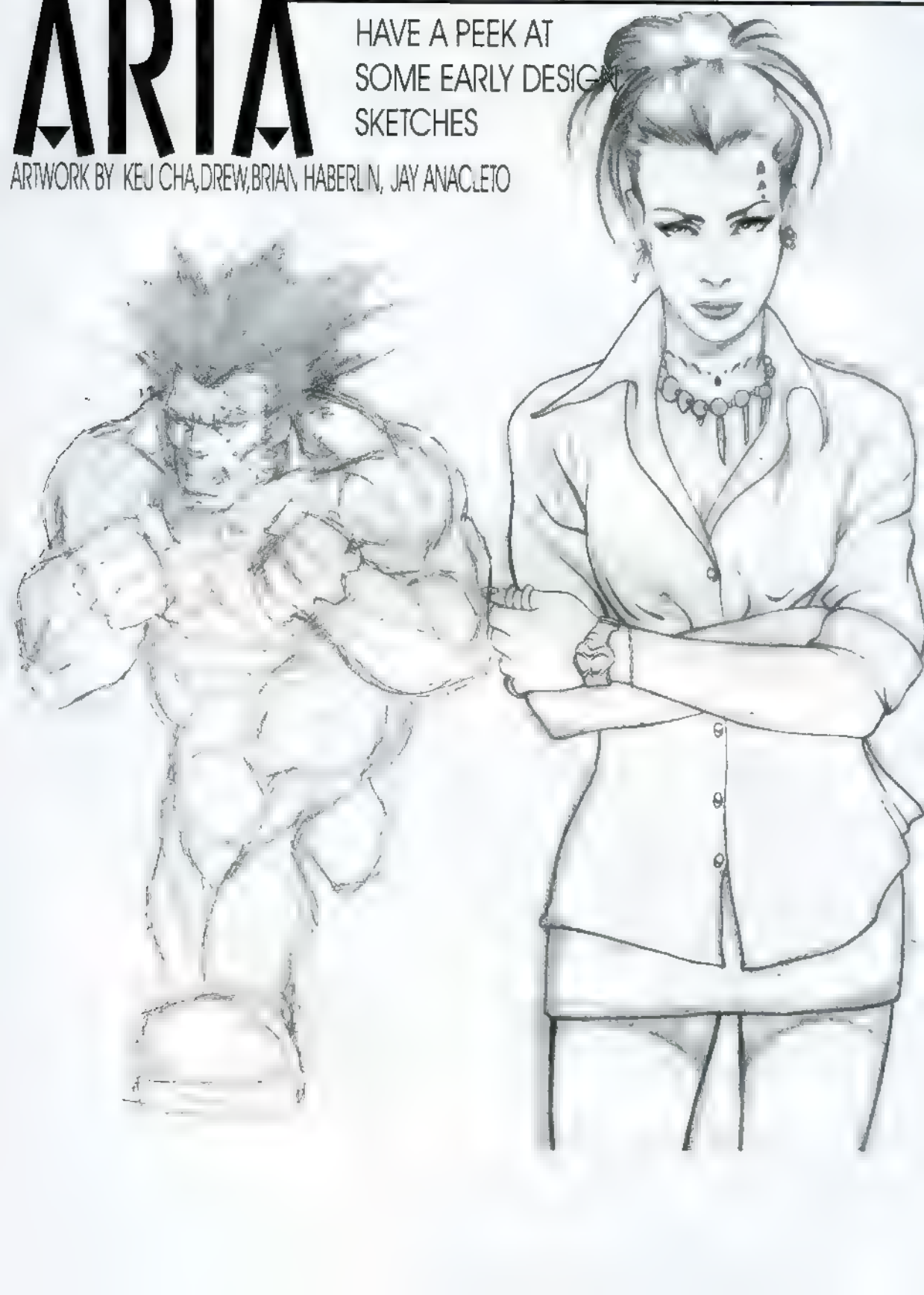
Michael Turner Alternate Cover

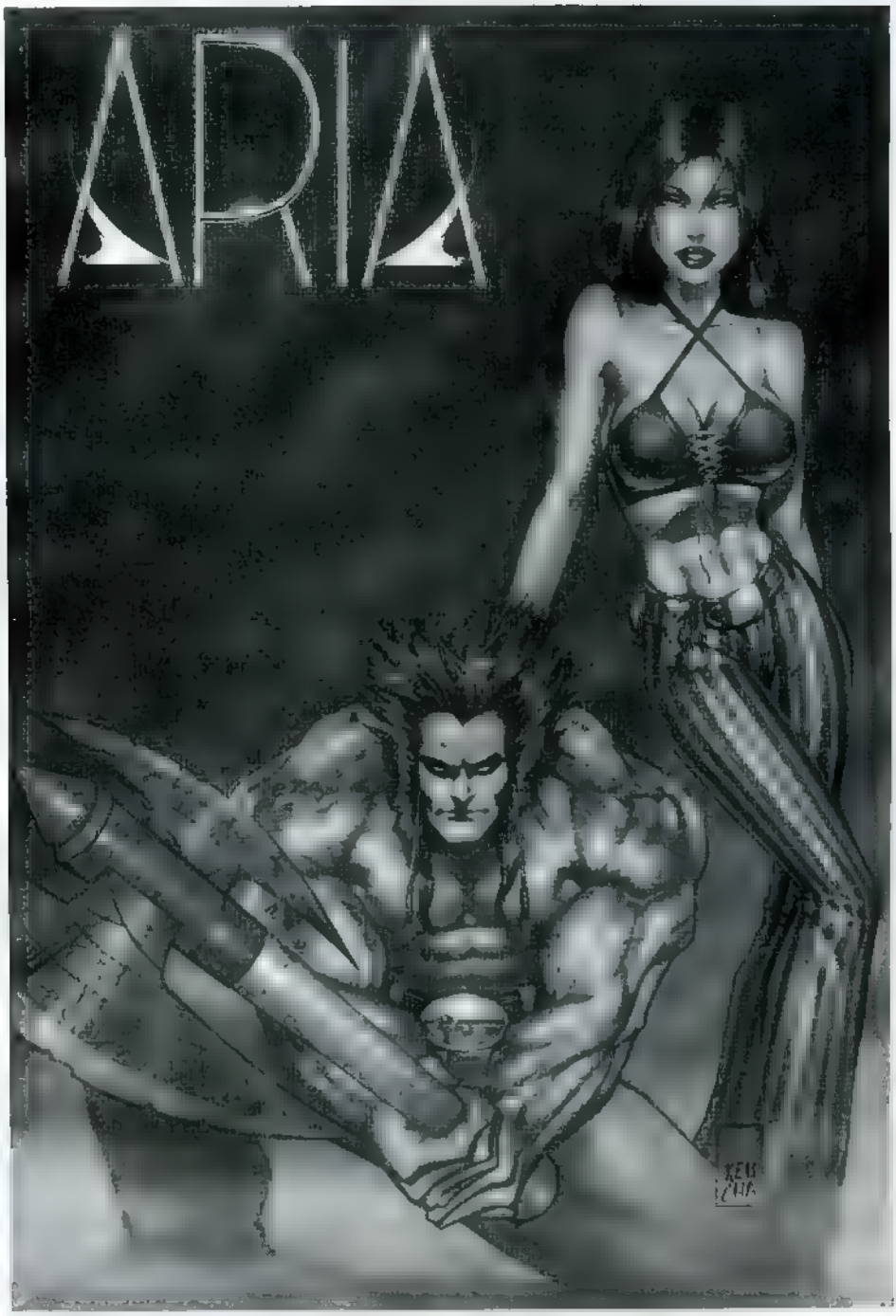
Jimmy Jay & Co. Alternate Cover

ARIA

HAVE A PEEK AT SOME EARLY DESIGN SKETCHES

ARTWORK BY KEJ CHA, DREW, BRIAN HABERLIN, JAY ANACLETO




ARIA

DESIGN SKETCHES

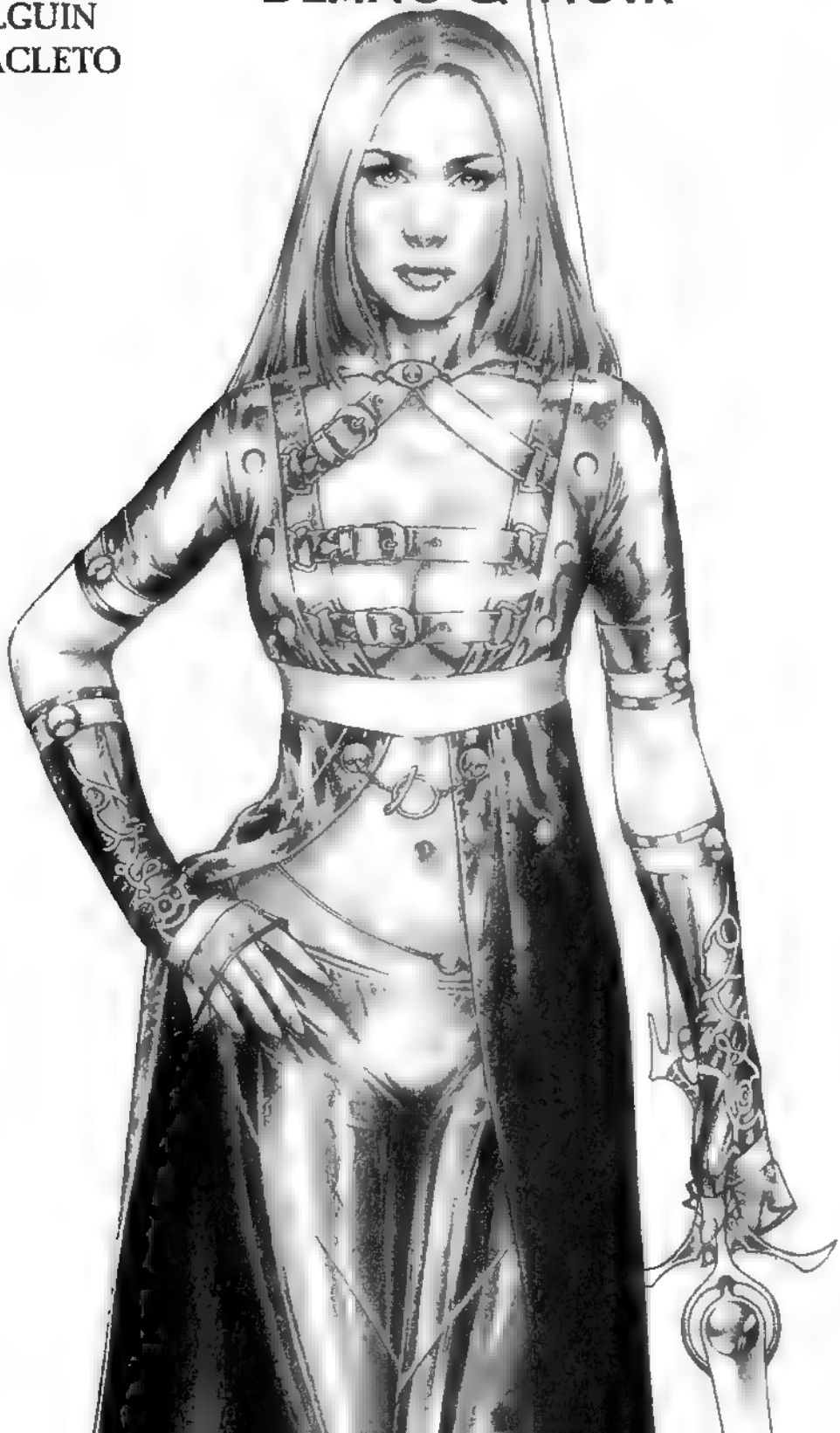
U.S.

ARIA

BLANC & NOIR

2 $2.50 6.00 CAN

HOLGUIN
ANACLETO



Sometimes I look at this world and it moves me to tears.
The joy and terror and the mad bloody
drama of it all.

And I wonder why THEY never seem to really see it.
Maybe one lifetime just isn't enough.
Or maybe it's too much. I can't say.

But the truth, to be perfectly plain, is that people are
looking for MAGIC in all the wrong places.

*

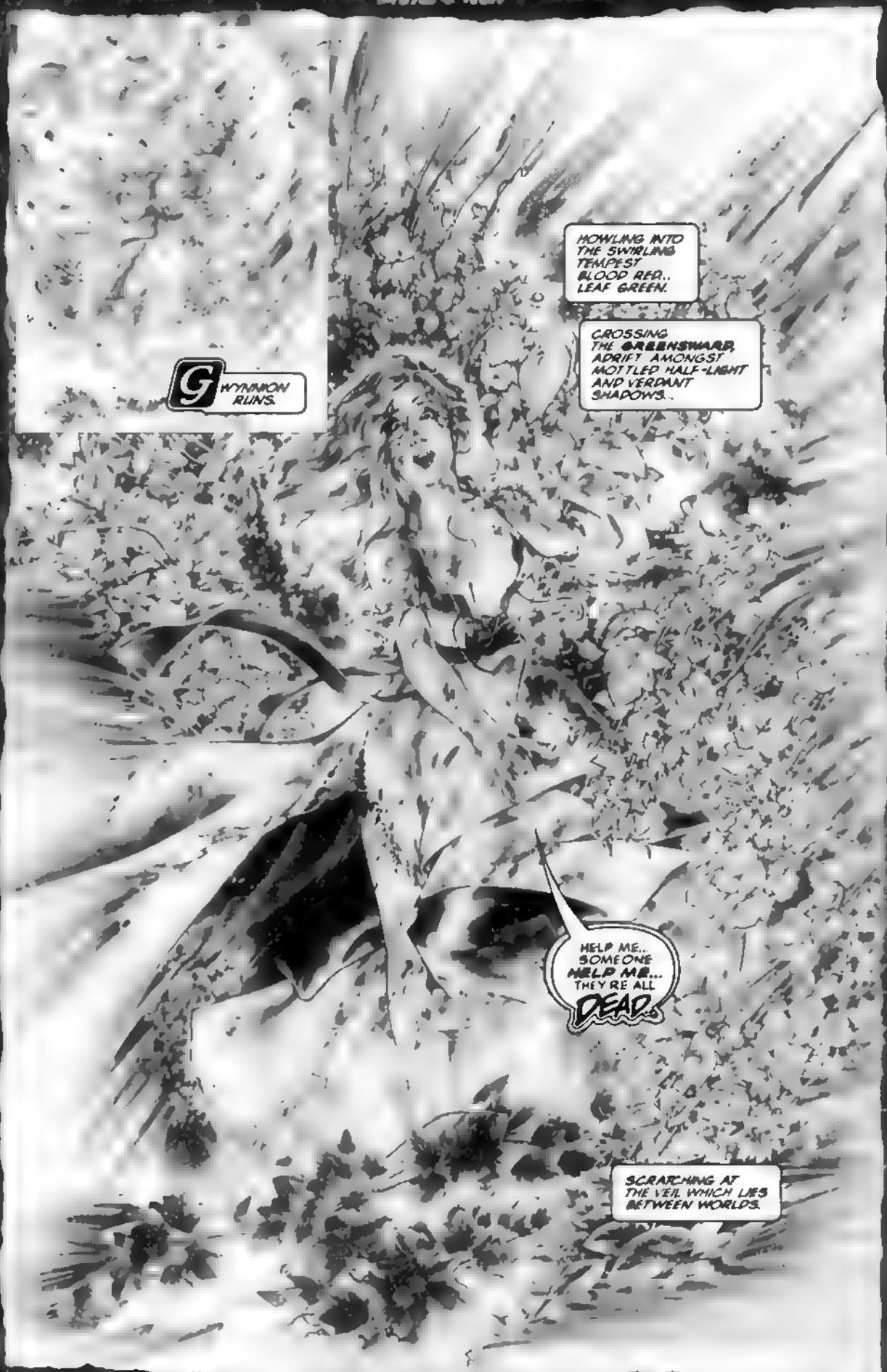
Somewhere around the corner, just beyond the edge of perception, lies a world you never dreamed existed.

A world where creatures of ancient myth, and gods long thought dead, walk unnoticed along the crowded streets of Manhattan. Where ladies of Faerie dance lonely nights away, bathed in soft neon glare. Where every shadow holds a secret, and every secret has a price. Where danger and wonder can be found at any turn, if you only know where to look.

Welcome to the World of...

ARIA

Aria Blanc & Noir Vol. 1, #2 Sept. 1999. FIRST PRINTING. Published by Image Comics Inc. Office of Publication: 1440 N. Harbor Blvd. Suite #305 Fullerton, CA 92635. $2.50 US/$4.00 Canada. ARIA Blanc & Noir, its logo and all related characters are trademark and copyright Brian Haberlin & Brian Holguin 1999. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Any similarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reprinted without the express written consent of Brian Haberlin & Brian Holguin. PRINTED IN CANADA.


GWYNNON RUNS.
HOWLING INTO THE SWIRLING TEMPEST BLOOD RED.. LEAF GREEN.
CROSSING THE GREENSWARD, ADRIFT AMONGST MOTTLED HALF-LIGHT AND VERDANT SHADOWS..
HELP ME.. SOMEONE HELP ME... THEY'RE ALL DEAD...
SCRATCHING AT THE VEIL WHICH LIES BETWEEN WORLDS.

UGHH. SEVEN SISTERS, WHAT A HANG-OVER.

WHAT THE HELL...

WHO'S..?

ARIA
Blanc & Noir

THE SHORES OF SORROW

Brian Holguin Story
Jay Anacleto Art Roy A. Martinez Art (Pgs.10-14)
Andy Troy, Alex, Brian Haberlin Color
Dennis Heisler Letters
"Aria" created by
Brian Holguin with Brian Haberlin

GINNY?!

HELP ME!

SHE STEPS FROM SPACE TO SPACE, WHERE WORLDS OVERLAP.

CHASED BY UNSEEN PURSUERS AND HALF-FORGOTTEN GHOSTS.

@WYNNION.

MAD @INNY.

TING TANG!
KNOCK-KNOCK! HEY, DARIE! YOU UP, LASS? HOW'S YOUR HEAD?
OKAY, GINNY, JUST SLOW DOWN. TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED...
AT THE GREENMAN... THE MOON FEAST... THEY'RE DEAD. ALL O' THEM, THE HARPER, AMAROU, OL' BESSIE...
DEAD? HOW? WHEN?
YESTER-NIGHT... I THINK...I DON'T KNOW. OH, COUSIN, I'M SO SCARED...
JUST CALM DOWN. YOU'RE SAFE NOW.
OI!
PUG, HEY. UMM, LOOK. GINNY'S HERE. I'M NOT QUITE SURE WHAT'S GOING ON...
WHAT'S IN THE BAG, HUH? YOU BRING ME BREAKFAST?
YEAH, THAT'S IT. BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS. NOTHIN' LIKE A BIG FREAKIN' BOWL O' UGLY MONSTER FLAKES! EAT UP, GIRLS.
THIS IS JUST HOW I WANTED TO START MY DAY.
HEAD THROBBING FROM A NIGHT OF WINE AND DANCING. MY COUSIN SHOWS UP OUT OF NOWHERE, COVERED IN BLOOD, SCREAMING ABOUT SOME MASSACRE...
PLOP

AA-AAH
NO...
NOOOOO!
AND JUST WHEN I GET HER CLEANED UP AND HALF-WAY LUCID, THE PUG STROLLS IN AND MANAGES TO SET HER OFF AGAIN.
BRILLIANT. IT TOOK ME TWENTY MINUTES TO GET HER CALMED DOWN...WHAT THE HELL IS THAT THING?!
I COULD STRANGLE HIM.
DUNNO. FOLLOWED ME HOME AND TRIED TO TAKE MY HEAD OFF. ONE FOLLOWED YOU, TOO. I FOUND TRACKS IN THE ALLEY...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
GINNY, HANG ON. IT'S OKAY. JUST RELAX, HONEY...
BUT SOMETHING WEIRD IS DEFIN TELY GOING ON. I DON'T LIKE THE SMELL OF IT.
TCH! FAERIES... ALWAYS SO TOUCHY.
OH, PERFECT.
GET AWAY FROM ME!
GWYNNION'S NOT THE CA..MEST SOUL UNDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES.
THERE'S A REASON WE CALL HER MAD GINNY.
HEY, ISN'T THAT--?
YUP. THE BLADE OF THE NIGHT DJINN...
BLOODY BRIGHT THING TO LEAVE OUT IN THE OPEN, GIRLIE...

TWENTY BLOCKS AWAY...
CHILDE ROLAND, PRINCE OF THE LESSER BOULEVARDS, AWAKENS.
I GOTTA JET. MY FATHER'S GONNA FREAK.
FATHERS ALWAYS DO.
LISTEN. WHAT YOU SAID IN THE CLUB LAST NIGHT...THAT STUFF ABOUT BEING, LIKE, AN ELF OR SOMETHING... WERE YOU SERIOUS?
HALF-ELF. ON MY FATHER'S SIDE. FAERIE WOMAN CAN'T HAVE CHILDREN ANYMORE. OR VERY RARELY, ANYWAY.
HAHA. YOU'RE WEIRD. BUT IN A GOOD WAY. I LIKE YOU.
WAIT. I HAVE A PRESENT FOR YOU. A LITTLE POEM...
I LOVE IT.
OH WOW. IT'S ON A REAL LEAF AND EVERYTHING. DID YOU REALLY WRITE IT?
MMM-HMM.
THANKS, FOR EVERYTHING. BYE!

IARCK'S —
GROVE
AS I WAS GOIN' OV-ER, THE CARK-IN-KARAH MOUNTAIN... I SPIED ON CAPTAIN FAR-REL, AND HIS MONEY HE WAS COUNTIN'...
I FIRST PRODUCED MY PIS-TOL, AND THEN PRODUCED MY RAPIER... I SAID, "STAND AND DEL-I-VER OR THE DEVIL, HE MAY TAKE YOU..."
SO, DO YOU LIKE IT, ANGELINE?
IT'S BEAUTIFUL, HONEY. HAUNTING. I HAD A DREAM *JUST* LIKE IT THE OTHER NIGHT.
GREAT. THAT'S FOR BREAKFAST, THEN?
YOU GOT IT.
SLOW BUSINESS TODAY, EH, FELLAS?
HMM. WHAT'S THAT, THEN? WHERE?

OKAY, SO WHERE WERE WE? MADNESS, VIOLENCE AND UNEXPECTED VISITORS ALL BEFORE 10A.M.
NOT A GREAT MORNING.
HOW YOU FEELING, HON? LOOK, PUG'S REAL SORRY HE HAD TO HIT YOU AND ALL...
IT'S OKAY.
PRETTY... I HAD ONE OF THESE WHEN I WAS A GIRL. YOUR FATHER GAVE IT TO ME, REMEMBER?
YEAH, I REMEMBER.
YOU JUST LAY DOWN AND GET SOME REST NOW. ME AND PUG WILL FIGURE EVERYTHING OUT. PROMISE.
I WONDER IF THIS HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH COUNT IBLIS PASSING THROUGH TOWN. NOT REALLY HIS STYLE THOUGH, NO PANACHE.
AND SPEAKING OF PANACHE...
HUL-LO KILDARE! AIN'T I A PRETTY BEASTIE? GIVE US A KISS, AWRIGHT?
CUTE, PUG. YOU'RE A HUGE HELP, YOU KNOW THAT?
SO WHAT IN SEVEN HELLS IS GOING ON? YOU SAY THIS THING FOLLOWED YOU?
YEAH. IT TRAILED US FROM DION'S. I WAITED TILL YOU WERE HOME SAFE, AND THEN ME AND CUDDLES HERE HAD A BIT OF A FACE OFF.
I WON.
BZZZT
HEY, KILDY! YOU READY?
WHO IS IT? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
IT'S ME, [redacted] OPEN UP!

ONDINE. SHOOT. I FORGOT. WE WERE MEANT TO GO SHOPPING TODAY.
LET ME IN, IT'S COLD OUT HERE.
WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU'RE NOT EVEN DRESSED YET. AND YOUR HAIR...
CHANGE OF PLANS, GIRLFRIEND. THINGS ARE A BIT COMPLICATED RIGHT NOW...
COMPLICATED? COMPLICATED HOW?
WELL...
WHAT'LL IT BE GIRLS? A WING, OR A THIGH?
SO ANYWAY, THAT'S ABOUT ALL WE KNOW. GINNY'S UPSTAIRS SLEEPING. AS FOR WHAT EXACTLY PUG IS DOING, I COULDN'T TELL YOU.
HEY! MARTHA STEWART! I HOPE YOU'RE RUINING MY HENKEL KNIFE SET FOR A GOOD REASON.
GOD, IT'S SO HORRIBLE. WHAT DO YOU THINK IT IS?
I MEAN, I KNEW A COUPLE OF BRIDGE TROLLS BACK IN PRAGUE, BUT THEY WEREN'T NEAR UGLY AS THAT.
HAH! OUR LITTLE FRIEND HAS A SECRET.

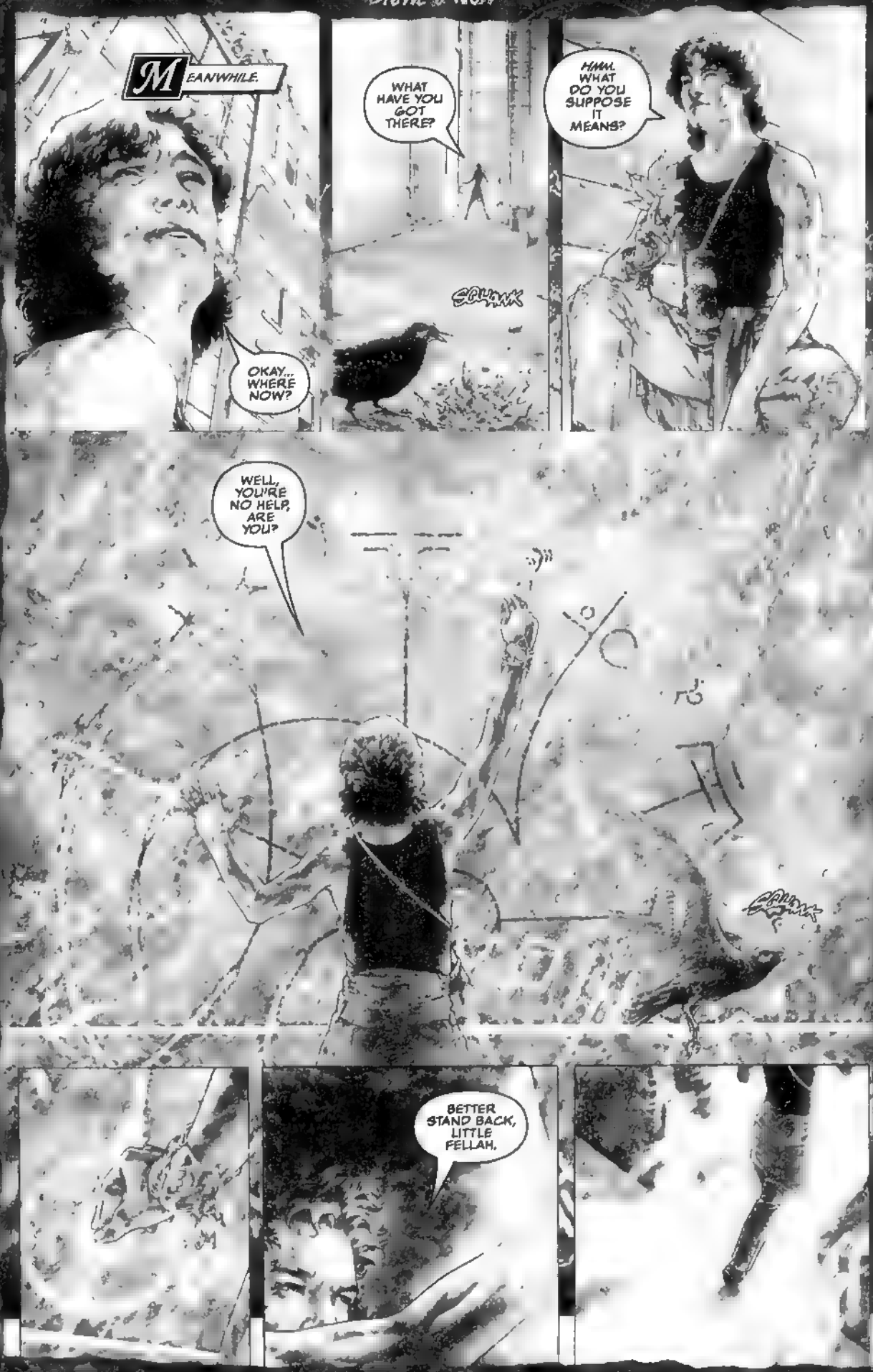
"LISTEN, ONDINE, DO ME A BIG FAVOR AND KEEP AN EYE ON GINNY. WE'RE GONNA GO SEE WHAT WE CAN FIND OUT ABOUT THIS MESS."
"OKAY. NO PROBLEM. DOES SHE NEED ANYTHING?"
"NO. SHE'S OUT LIKE A LIGHT. JUST LET HER SLEEP."
ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS A LADY FAIR...

A GOLDEN CHILD OF A GOLDEN AGE. HER EYES DANCED LIKE DISTANT FIRES, AND HER LAUGHTER RANG LIKE A HUNDRED GLASS BELLS.
GWYNNION THE BRIGHT, THEY CALLED HER. PROUD DAUGHTER OF THE FAR LANDS.
SHE WAS BOLD AND DARING. FEARLESS.
WITH HER COUSIN, KILDARE, SHE WOULD VENTURE INTO THE REALMS OF MAN. MANY WERE THE HEARTS THEY BROKE WITH A CARELESS GLANCE, OR A SUBTLE WORD.
ONE SMILE AND AN ENTIRE COURT WOULD BE ENCHANTED. ONE REBUKE, AND EMPIRES WOULD GO TO WAR.
BUT THE WORLD BEGAN TO CHANGE.

THE AGE OF STONE AND SOD GAVE WAY TO AN AGE OF IRON AND STEAM.
SCIENCE USURPED IMAGINATION, AND THE OLD WAYS BEGAN TO DIE.
BUT THE WORLD, MUCH AS IT HAD CHANGED, STILL HAD WOLVES IN IT.

THERE ARE SUCH WOLVES THAT HIDE THEIR TRUTH BEHIND FLASHING SMILES. WHO WEAR THEIR BRISTLES ON THE INSIDE
CRUEL BEASTS WHO WOULD LURE A FOOLISH GIRL INTO THE WOODS AND MAKE A MEAL OF HER.
INTO A DARKENED WOOD HE STOLE HER, AND TORE AT HER FROM THE INSIDE OUT.
HE BURROWED IN THE DARK WARMTH OF HER, MADE DRUNK BY THE SCENT OF HER HOT BLOOD.
SHE RAN SCREAMING INTO THE NIGHT, BUT COULD NOT GET AWAY.
HE DEVOURED HER.

AND SO HE LEFT HER, FRAYED AND BROKEN, A POISON SECRET GROWING INSIDE HER.
AND THEN THE MADNESS CAME UPON HER. NO ONE COULD UNDERSTAND. NOT EVEN HER.
THE FIRE IN HER EYES WENT OUT AND THE BELLS OF HER LAUGHTER WERE SILENCED.
THAT WAS HOW THEY FOUND HER. BLISTERED AND BLEEDING. SCARRED FOREVER ACROSS HER INSIDES.
CAST UP BY A CRUEL SEA. DISCARDED WRECKAGE UPON THE SHORES OF SORROW.
POOR, SAD LITTLE GWYNNION.
MAD GINNY. THEY WOULD CALL HER.


MEANWHILE.
OKAY... WHERE NOW?
WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE?
SQUAWK
HMM. WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE IT MEANS?
WELL, YOU'RE NO HELP, ARE YOU?
SQUAWK
BETTER STAND BACK, LITTLE FELLAH.

FIGURED THE BEST PLACE TO START WAS WITH THE SPHINX. GET SOME IDEA WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH.
KNOCK KNOCK
HE'S AN ODD ONE, THAT'S FOR SURE. A COMPLETE MYSTERY, EVEN TO ME.
I HAVE NO CLUE HOW OLD HE IS OR WHERE HE CAME FROM. FOR ALL I KNOW, HE'S THE ONLY ONE OF HIS KIND.
HE HAS A UNIQUE GIFT FOR PUZZLES, RIDDLES, CODES, POSERS, CIPHERS, SEALS...YOU NAME IT, HE CAN CRACK IT.
HE KEEPS TO HIMSELF MOSTLY. NOT EXACTLY MISTER WARMTH. BUT HE'S ALWAYS TREATED ME FAIRLY.
COME IN, LADY KILDARE.

WELCOME, AND TO YOU TOO, SIR PUG.
AYE.
I KNOW YOU DON'T GET OUT MUCH, SO WE BROUGHT YOU SOME
SPLENDID.
SO, LISTEN, WE NEED YOUR HELP...
OF COURSE.
CAN YOU TELL US WHAT THIS IS?
PFFHHHHHH
FIRST THINGS FIRST, KILDARE. YOU KNOW THE CONTRACT...

RIGHT. A BOON FOR A BOON A RIDDLE FOR A RIDDLE.
OKAY, THIS IS A GOOD ONE. YOU'LL LIKE IT.
AHEM! KNOCK-KNOCK!
HMMM... LET'S SEE... "KNOCK-KNOCK"? AH! WHO IS THERE?
THE [illegible] COW.
MOOOOOO!
MOST UNUSUAL. WELL, LET ME SEE... I BELIEVE THE PROPER RESPONSE WOULD BE, " THE INTER-RUPT--"
"--ING COW WHO?"
MMM... "MOO," YES... YES...
I LIKE IT.

NOW, LET ME SEE...AH. IT IS A SCROLL. ONE MUST TURN THE CYLINDERS IN PROPER COMBINATION TO OPEN IT.
IT NO DOUBT CONTAINS A SPELL. A NAME MOST LIKELY.
A NAMING SPELL, HUH? THAT'S STRONG STUFF.
YES. IT IS THE OLDEST FORM OF MAGIC. TO NAME A THING IS TO DEFINE IT. TO DEFINE A THING IS TO CONTROL IT. "IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS THE WORD..."
ANY IDEA WHERE IT CAME FROM? I'VE NEVER SEEN THESE MARKINGS BEFORE.
I AM NOT A HISTORIAN, KILDARE.
HERE. I HAVE ALIGNED THE CHAMBERS. TWIST THE BASE CLOCKWISE AND IT WILL OPEN.
BUT NOT HERE. DO IT SOMEWHERE SAFE, IF YOU CHOSE TO OPEN IT AT ALL.
GOTCHA.
THANKS A LOT. ENJOY THE PEA-PODS.
CHEERS.
tragedy may soon befall a friend.

ENGLAND.
...FOR A STUNNING 3-1 VICTORY OVER HEAVILY FAVORED MANCHESTER
IN OTHER NEWS, POLICE ARE STILL SEARCHING FOR NIGEL HAWTHORNE, WHO ESCAPED FROM A JAIL CELL IN COTSWALDS LATE YESTERDAY. TWO GUARDS WERE VICIOUSLY STABBED DURING THAT EPISODE.
HAWTHORNE HAD BEEN DETAINED AT THE JAIL ON CHARGES OF DISTURBING THE PEACE, PENDING A COMPETENCY HEARING.
HE HAD BEEN ARRESTED WHILST CAUSING A COMMOTION IN THE HIGH STREET, REPORTEDLY ISSUING THREATS AND WARNINGS ABOUT "GOBLINS AND FAIRIES."
POLICE HAVE ISSUED A WARNING THAT MR. HAWTHORNE IS CONSIDERED DANGEROUS AND POSSIBLY ARMED.
ANYONE WITH INFORMATION REGARDING HIS WHEREABOUTS SHOULD CONTACT THE AUTHORITIES IMMEDIATELY.
AND THAT'S THE NEWS THIS EVENING. I'M NEVILLE WEAKES. WE NOW RETURN TO THE BBC LIGHT PROGRAMME...
EASY THERE, LAD. NO TROUBLES, OKAY?
NO SUCH LUCK, I'M AFRAID. NOT TODAY, LUV.
POLICE

NEW YORK.
SO LET'S SUM UP, SHALL WE? NAMELESS EVIL HUNTING DOWN AND SLAUGHTERING MY KINSMEN...
A MYSTERIOUS, SEVERED HEAD ROTTING IN THE KITCHEN SINK...
AN EMOTIONALLY SCARRED COUSIN IN THE MIDST OF A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN...
AND A SPELL OF UNKNOWN PROPERTIES SITTING LIKE A GRENADE IN MY COAT POCKET. THAT ABOUT COVER IT?
SO YOU GOTTA THINK, THINGS CAN'T GET ANY WORSE, RIGHT?
LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING. WHEN YOU'VE BEEN AROUND AS LONG AS I HAVE, YOU LEARN A FEW THINGS.
FOR STARTERS, NEVER SAY NEVER.
TO BE CONTINUED...

ULYSSES²

PREVIEW PAGES

Coming early next year
from Avalon Studios.

Art by Whilce Portacio
Story by Brian Haberlin